

SR Supply Chain Consultants Ltd

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

SR Supply Chain Consultants Ltd was inspected in October 2021. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in responding to the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

SR Supply Chain Consultants Ltd provides procurement training across the country. At the time of the visit, there were 307 apprentices enrolled on apprenticeship standards. There are 250 apprentices enrolled on the level 4 commercial procurement and supply apprenticeship standard. The remaining apprentices are enrolled on the level 3 procurement and supply assistant apprenticeship standard.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in implementing quality processes that all staff consistently follow to improve the apprenticeship provision? To what extent have leaders implemented governance arrangements to provide effective challenge and scrutiny and hold leaders to account?

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. They have implemented a range of quality assurance techniques to monitor and improve the quality of education that apprentices receive. Managers use the results from these processes to put in place targeted actions for improvement. Senior leaders meet bi-monthly to review this information and carefully monitor the progress they are making. As a result, clear development plans are in place to support improvements.

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have put in place appropriate governance arrangements. Board members have the appropriate skills and expertise to provide support and challenge on the quality of education that apprentices receive. They have experience in the further education and skills sector with specific specialisms in apprenticeship training.

Board members receive useful reports that enable them to provide support and challenge to senior leaders. For example, they provide information on apprentices that are beyond their planned end dates and on the number of apprentices on support plans. However, board members rightly recognise that the reports they receive require further development. Reports are heavily focused on data and do not

place sufficient focus on all aspects of the quality of education that apprentices receive.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that all apprentices have individualised programmes of learning and apply new knowledge that they have learned at work? To what extent are leaders ensuring that teaching staff support apprentices to achieve high grades in their final assessments?

Reasonable progress

Progress mentors collect information about what apprentices already know and can do at the start of their apprenticeship. They use this information to plan an individualised curriculum with apprentices' managers. For example, apprentices learn about budgeting in line with their budgeting cycle at work. This ensures that apprentices practise their skills swiftly in the workplace.

Progress mentors effectively plan and coordinate on- and off-the-job training. They work with apprentices' line managers to support apprentices to apply their new learning in the workplace. Level 3 apprentices learn about the types of documents used in procurement, such as purchase orders and requisitions. Following this training, they are confident to use a range of procurement documentation and complete tasks such as raising purchase orders.

Senior leaders are strengthening the processes for final assessments. Most apprentices know the requirements of their final assessments. Tutors provide useful feedback that informs apprentices about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Apprentices increasingly improve their analytical and evaluative skills in their written work. However, apprentices are not aware, early enough in their apprenticeship, of the grades to which they are aspiring.

What progress have leaders and managers made to improve the teaching that apprentices receive in order to ensure they quickly develop their English and mathematical skills?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, leaders have altered how they provide English and mathematics training to apprentices. They have recruited progress mentors with relevant qualifications and experience in teaching English and/or mathematics in the education sector in order to provide training to apprentices. Apprentices now benefit from attending workshop sessions and completing online tasks. Apprentices who fall behind receive individual support, and progress mentors quickly put actions in place to help them catch up. However, progress mentors do not routinely set targets for apprentices to develop specific English or mathematical skills that they need to learn. As a result, a few apprentices do not make swift enough progress in their functional skills.

Apprentices continue to develop their English and mathematical skills while on their apprenticeship. They complete assessments at the start of their apprenticeship to identify gaps in knowledge. Apprentices attend English and/or mathematics workshops to develop their skills further. Most apprentices apply their new knowledge and skills when completing tasks in the workplace. For example, they use ratios to accurately assess a company's financial compatibility. Apprentices learn how to use commas and join complex sentences accurately when writing reports. Work produced is of a high standard and demonstrates improvement over time.

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that apprentices receive impartial careers information, advice and guidance? To what extent have leaders and managers made progress in ensuring that apprentices understand the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism? How much progress have they made in ensuring that apprentices understand the relevance of these risks in their workplace?

Reasonable progress

Leaders continue to strengthen the ongoing careers information and guidance they give to apprentices. Level 4 apprentices know about roles in the public and private sectors, such as senior buying roles and procurement management. Level 3 apprentices are aware of further study options. Most apprentices aspire to progress to higher level study.

Leaders have recently launched a 'learner hub' to provide information on topics such as careers and personal development. The hub has links to a range of online sites, articles and podcasts on subjects such as leadership and procurement. Leaders have plans in place to provide online career sessions that include workshops on CV writing and interview skills. Leaders acknowledge that further development is required to ensure that all apprentices are aware of the wider opportunities available in procurement.

Apprentices complete online modules at the start of their apprenticeship on topics such as safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They know about the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremist views and learn how to recognise signs that peers or colleagues may be at risk. However, apprentices do not fully understand the relevance of these risks in their workplace.

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